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NEWS RELEASE

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the verdict today of Hassan Serag, age 45; and Joyce Snowden, age 46, on charges stemming from a marriage fraud operation run from a hot dog vending cart in Washington, D.C. Serag and Snowden were found guilty by a jury of conspiracy to commit immigration fraud. In addition, Snowden was found guilty of providing a false statement to Citizenship and Immigration Services, a branch of the Department of Homeland Security. The Honorable James C. Cacheris, United States District Judge, presided over the three-day trial. Sentencing is scheduled for September 9, 2005, at which time they face a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000.

Hassan Serag, along with four other associates, arranged several fraudulent marriages for Middle Eastern men during 2002 and 2003 to attempt to obtain lawful permanent residence status for the prospective grooms. The four associates were previously convicted of related conspiracy and immigration charges. The scheme began in Washington, D.C. where the illegal alien men worked with Serag. Serag arranged for the men to meet Aabid Shoeib, a hot dog vendor, who would arrange with another associate to find African American women who would pose as a bride in return for money.

Once the prospective groom and bride met, a civil wedding ceremony was held in Arlington, Virginia. The bride and groom would then go their separate ways. The defendants Serag and Joyce Snowden assisted the groom in preparing false paperwork and documentation for submission to Citizenship and Immigration Services, claiming that the couple was in fact married and living together.

Mr. McNulty praised the efforts of the special agents from the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Jeanine Linehan and Special Assistant Lana Pettus handled the prosecution for the United States.

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